

Message Text

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SUBJECT: EDITORIAL COMMENT ON U.S. BEEF QUOTAS

1. ALL PAPERS IN MONTREAL, BOTH ANGLOPHONE AND FRANCOPHONE, HAVE GIVEN PROMINENT COVERAGE TO U.S. IMPOSITION OF BEEF QUOTAS. THE GAZETTE IS ONLY PAPER TO DATE, HOWEVER, TO CARRY EDITORIAL ON SUBJECT. GAZETTE EDITORIAL OF OCTOBER 13 FOLLOWS:

"IT WOULD BE TOO BAD IF THE NEW UNITED STATES QUOTAS TO BE NEGOTIATED ON BEEF IMPORTS SHOULD LEAD TO RENEWAL OF THE MEAT WAR WITH CANADA WHICH WAS ONLY CALLED OFF LAST JANUARY. THIS COUNTRY HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE PRESENT SKIRMISHING--IN CONTRAST WITH THE EARLIER ACTION, WHICH IT STARTED BY BARRING IMPORTS OF BEEF FROM CATTLE FATTENED WITH DES, A SYNTHETIC HORMONE AND SUSPECTED CARCINOGEN SOMETIMES USES AS A NEXT-DAY CONTRACEPTIVE.

"THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DISSENTS FROM THE CURRENT VIEW OF CANADIAN INNOCENCE, BUT AUSTRALIA APPEARS, SQUIDLIKE, TO BE MORE INTENT ON OBSCURING ITS OWN INVOLVEMENT THAN IN CLARIFYING THE REAL STATE OF AFFAIRS. EACH YEAR THE U.S. NEGOTIATES VOLUNTARY QUOTAS WITH ALL ITS BEEF SUPPLIERS EXCEPT CANADA, TRADITIONALLY EXEMPT. AS PART OF THE EARLIER TRUCE, OTTAWA WAS ASSURED IT COULD SHIP AS MUCH AS 90 MILLION POUNDS OF BEEF THIS YEAR, AND ONLY ABOUT THREE FOURTHS OF THAT HAS BEEN EXPORTED SO FAR.

"AUSTRALIA, HOWEVER, HAS TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF A LOOPHOLE IN THE U.S. MEAT IMPORT LAW, UNDER WHICH PRESIDENT FORD HAS JUST
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ACTED. THROUGH THIS LOOPHOLE, LOCATED IN THE FREE-TRADE ZONE

OF MAYAGUEZ, PUERTO RICO, AUSTRALIA HAS SHIPPED IN 40 MILLION POUNDS OF BEEF OVER ITS CEILING. BY A LEGAL OVERSIGHT, IMPORTS THROUGH THE PUERTO RICAN ZONE CANNOT BE COUNTED AGAINST THE QUOTAS.

"SINCE THE LATEST RESTRICTION WILL REDUCE TOTAL IMPORTS THIS YEAR BY ONLY 17 MILLION POUNDS, IT IS CLEAR THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO NEED FOR ACTION WITHOUT THE EXCESS AUSTRALIAN SHIPMENTS.

"STILL, IT IS THE AMERICAN LAW THAT HAS ALLOWED THE UNNEEDED IMPORTS, AND IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE U.S. ELECTION THAT HAS PROMPTED MR. FORD TO ACT AT THIS TIME MEASURED ON THE SCALE OF U.S. CONSUMPTION, THE EFFECT OF THE NEW RESTRICTION WILL BE MINIMAL. THE REVISED QUOTAS WILL APPLY TO ONLY ABOUT SIX PER CENT OF THE BEEF AMERICANS EAT, AND THE REDUCTION AFFECTS LESS THAN TWO PER CENT OF THAT SIX. BUT IF THE AMERICAN FARMERS LIKE IT, THAT WILL BE WHAT COUNTS OVER THE NEXT THREE WEEKS, EVEN IF IT MEANS HEADACHES FOR A LOT OF OTHER PEOPLE IN A DOZEN OTHER COUNTRIES.

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